

## Council looks to increase sport opportunities for Town

Council this week will look at two ways of enhancing the Town's sports pickleball and hockey participation.

Next week, two motions will be presented to the Town aiming to enable residents to engage in meaningful sports opportunities.

If passed, staff will report back with possible creative opportunities to increase Pickleball courts for the 2023 summer season, and with a future Pickleball development plan with recommendations and future budget considerations through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Pickleball is the number one growing sport in North America that is gaining popularity in Aurora within numerous age groups, particularly adults and older adults. Previously, Pickleball leagues and courts in the Town of Aurora filled up within the same day of registration leaving many without an opportunity to try or play the sport.

To meet the demand, council will look for opportunities with existing tennis courts, under-utilized parking lots, or corporate and community partnerships that could be explored, to capitalize on the upcoming spring, summer and fall seasons and place focus on increasing participation.

Furthermore, Town staff will investigate and report back to Council on the feasibility of a permanent liquor license at the Aurora Community Centre arena as part of the Town's Sport Tourism Strategy.

The Strategy aims to enhance the visitor experience, bring new events into the community, highlight hometown athletes, and incorporate cultural experiences for the community and visitors.

Aurora has a proven growing hockey community of fans, emerging players, and residents, with talent such as Connor McDavid, Robert Thomas, Barclay Goodrow, and Jr Panther Abby Lunney.

The cost of watching NHL-level games in person has become extremely unaffordable for the average family or for couples to enjoy. A permanent liquor license to watch in-person, high-level hockey games such as the Jr. A Aurora Tigers and U18 Women's International Silver Stick Tournament would provide an opportunity for local athletes to compete in their hometown, celebrate and highlight the achievements of local athletes who are role models for future athletes.

**By Elisa Nguyen**